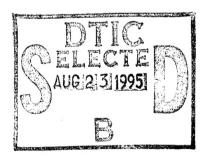
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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE Newport, R.I.

THEATER CINCs--WARRIORS OR POLITICIANS

by

Russell S. Carnot CDR USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature

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Paper directed by
Captain David Watson
Chairman, Department of Joint Military Operations

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Introduction

The famous debate between Imperial Prussia's Count Otto von Bismarck and Field Marshall Helmuth von Moltke over whether political decisions belong in military operations still continues today. An example is the criticism often leveled today that operations now being conducted by regional Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) are too political to the detriment of combat readiness. This criticism goes "hand-in-hand" with the recurring lament by some military members over what they perceive to be the interference of politics and politicians (both the civilian and the military variety) in peacetime training, planning, contingency operations, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), and war. Politics is also blamed for the role it plays in the seldom admitted but often subconscious constraint imposed on the military decision maker by concern over "Monday morning quarterbacking." This is specially true when the outcome of a CINC's operation is not precisely the one expected by national leaders or promised by those leaders to the nation (the "fog of war" defense doesn't play well in a CNN sound bite or before a Congressional committee).

The strongest reactions by military professionals are to operational constraints and/or decisions viewed as being solely politically driven and not resulting from dispassionate military analysis--whether these constraints are actually imposed by civilian authority or the result of guidance from higher echelon military commanders reading the political "tea leaves." But is not political awareness that leads to such guidance a necessity for a modern CINC? The War Colleges and many writings in professional military journals recognize the primacy of politics at the national strategic level (e.g. the Naval War College dedicates a semester to the principle in its curriculum). Yet there is protest from many military officers when politics naturally flows down to the operational and tactical levels. That political

considerations define the strategic end is accepted--but politics (and civilian authority) are then ideally to remain at the strategic level and out of the commander's selection of means and operational objectives. Reality is necessarily different.

With the Cold War's demise, geographic CINCs have publicly stated how their theater operations support the new National Security Strategy (produced by civilian political authority). Yet these "engagement and enlargement" operations have led them into areas that five years ago even they might have considered largely political and diplomatic in nature, and not as primary missions for their theater forces. Many military professionals still consider these activities, whether nation building, peace operations, or bilateral assistance, as properly belonging in the realms of other governmental agencies such as the State Department and Justice Department, or to international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), Red Cross, or CARE. This shift in operational emphasis is decried by Colonel Harry Summers and others as "unwittingly turning traditional American civil-military relations on its head." 1

To critics of the new engagement strategies, these uses of military capability detract from what they consider the military's principal mission of ensuring the *military* security of the U.S. (as differentiated from, for example, the economic or environmental). The argument that armed forces ready to fight and win the nation's wars serve as a deterrent to potential aggressors is readily accepted by both civilian and military leadership. But the same cannot be said for what is postulated as the deterrent effect of these "new" peace enlargement operations. Instead, they are viewed by opponents as a politically motivated threat to

Harry G. Summers, Jr. quoted in Stephen J. Cimbala, "Military Persuasion and the American Way of War," <u>Strategic Review</u>, vol. 22 no. 4, Fall 1994, p. 36.

readiness, diverting the resources from the armed forces' true peacetime objective--the aforementioned deterrence of potential aggressors by readiness for war.

Reality, however, is that despite the critics' protests, the regional CINCs are concentrating their theater operations in these new areas. Does this mean they are allowing political factors to play too great a role in their operational planning whereas in the past they would have concentrated on combat readiness? Are the CINCs allowing political judgment to supplement military judgment? This paper argues that in planning, coordinating and directing their forces, CINCs are called upon to use the skills of a diplomat and statesman as much as those of a warrior. Active CINC involvement in the diplomatic and politico-military realm is a long standing component of theater operations (vice just understanding the political ramifications/overall contributions to national strategy of the strategic objectives in their particular theaters). A CINC's political skill, and that of the forces he commands, may be decisive in determining operational and strategic success--particularly since consensus holds the most likely forms of theater conflict will be in the category of referred to as operations other than war.

Is it a continuing naïveté on the part of the officer corps and military writers who refuse to recognize the long existence of what they would term unnecessary "political guidance" at the operational-strategic level--the "we could win the war if the politicians did not tie our hands" attitude--that engenders these feelings? Or is it a valid feeling of discomfort that the military is in fact moving too far from its intended purpose as the quotation from Colonel Summers contends? If this is the direction in which the CINCs will be proceeding for the future, are there some past examples in both war and peace where a theater commander's political and diplomatic skill was as important as pure military

leadership? Are not today's CINCs just continuing what is in reality the long tradition of the soldier-statesman? Do they have a choice in their operational-strategic planning?

Two Theater CINCs in War and Politics

The cases of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and General Joseph W. Stilwell in World War II provide an excellent comparison in *political* success and failure at theater level. Both were required by the strategic environment to meld together national/international politics, diplomacy and military campaign planning. Each had to deal with a head of state in that individual's own country, Eisenhower with British Prime Minister Churchill and Stilwell with China's Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Interestingly, both were strongly supported by and the choice of General George C. Marshall.² At this point, the similarities sharply end.

Eisenhower recognized that Prime Minister Churchill was a leader with a strong personality and his own ideas on what should be the focus of effort in the European campaign. Churchill could be "...difficult indeed to combat when his conviction compelled disagreement with his views." However, Eisenhower also recognized Churchill as "...a great war leader and...a great man."

Stilwell, although in his position as Chief of Staff to Chaing Kai-Shek not possessing quite the full autonomy enjoyed by Eisenhower, did enjoy a similar power base to Eisenhower's in his other "hat" as chief of the American military mission in the China/Burma theater. Additionally, Stilwell had the inherent political power deriving from the fact that most of Roosevelt's messages went through his office and not the U.S.

Eisenhower, p. 61

Dwight D. Eisenhower, <u>Crusade in Europe</u> (New York,: Doubleday and Co. 1948, reprint edition, New York: Da Capo Press Inc., 1977, Da Capo Press, 1986) pp. 208-209; John E. Shephard, Jr., "Warriors and Politics: The Bitter Lesson of Stilwell in China," <u>Parameters</u>, March 1989, pp. 61-63.

Ambassador's.⁴ Unlike Eisenhower in his respect for Churchill as a strategist and wartime head of state, Stilwell held Chaing in contempt. He also tellingly expressed a dislike for politicians and politics, both American and Chinese.⁵ This disdain of politics combined with a lack of diplomatic skill was to be Stilwell's downfall.

Besides the requirement to directly interface with the leader of an allied nation in formulating campaign plans, each of these theater commanders had to contend with a publicly popular subordinate possessing his own independent conduit to that officer's national leader--Eisenhower with Field Marshall Sir Bernard Law Montgomery and Stilwell with General Claire L. Chennault (of Flying Tiger fame). Eisenhower's diplomatic skill and refusal to permit personalities to detract from the unity of effort is exemplified by his acceptance of Montgomery to command the British ground forces (although not his first choice) and then subsequent appointment of him to lead the initial Normandy assault.6 Stilwell, conversely, ended up in a debate over how best to defeat the Japanese with his subordinate Chennault (air vs. land) culminating in both protagonists personally briefing their respective war plans to President Roosevelt. Stilwell's failure to grasp the larger "great power" policy of Roosevelt (Roosevelt viewed China as a post-war Great Power), together with his poor appreciation of the prevailing political environment, resulted in initial adoption of Chennault's flawed plan. Even when Roosevelt later noved towards Stilwell's strategy (which was always favored by Marshall), he faced opposition from Chiang who demanded Stilwell's relief. Eventually Stilwell was recalled.⁷ Shephard concisely analyzes the criticality of political and diplomatic skills in this case:

Shephard, Jr., p. 63

Shephard, Jr., p. 63

Eisenhower, p. 211 and p. 223.

Shephard, Jr., pp. 67-74.

...one might pardon the reaction of some military professionals who would lay blame for failure in this case entirely at the feet of politicos whose constant meddling and failure to support the senior American field commander made his job extraordinarily difficult. There is more than a little justification for this view.

But it is unrealistic to expect that military policy at this level could have been divorced from either short-term or long-term political objectives....Despite Stilwell's disdain for politics and politicians..., he was up to his neck--and eventually, over his head--in high level political battles requiring negotiation, compromise, and coalition-building....Had he been more adept at operating in a political environment, perhaps he could have enjoyed more success in pursuing the military objectives he sought.⁸

The experiences of Eisenhower and Stilwell provide an excellent lesson in the requirements for a theater commander in wartime to fully appreciate the scope and ramifications of the overarching political environment in which the battle is being waged. Politics plays both in the internal functioning of a theater command--particularly in coalition warfare--and externally as the CINC represents his theater at the national strategic level. Eisenhower succeeded magnificently while Stilwell (interestingly with a background in China, including language skills, not unlike one of today's Foreign Area Officers) failed even though correct in his *military* assessment of what was required for *military* success in the China/Burma theater. It was Stilwell's fatal flaw that he was unable to grasp the necessity for and dimensions of politics in theater strategy. In contrast, Eisenhower's success resulted in part from the his ability to skillfully mold a coalition and keep it progressing toward the strategic objective (unconditional German surrender). He did not allow potentially disruptive internal and external geo-political forces to divert the focus of effort in the very political European theater.

Shephard, Jr. pp. 73-74.

Peacetime NATO Commanders--Modern Warrior Diplomats

A few years after the Allied victory, a movement quickly developed to spread U.S. ideals while countering the growing threat of the Soviet Union. Programs such as the Marshall Plan grew out of both hard security concerns and U.S. convictions aptly summed up by the May 29, 1947 report of The President's Advisory Commission on Universal [Military] Training stating "We cannot prosper in starving world. We cannot be secure when all about us is in chaos and despair. Through the United Nations and through our own moral leadership, we must provide help and hope to those harder hit than we by the war we helped to win..." This evidences the national level civilian and military leaders recognized at the Cold War's beginning that future U.S. security required not only military force, but also shared ideals and economic strength among its allies. A component of this developing political, diplomatic and economic strategy for the security in Europe was the newly created North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). That the commanders of NATO had more than a purely military role is articulated by a former Supreme Commander, Allied Forces Europe (SACEUR), General Bernard Rogers. He described deterrence of NATO's adversary, the Soviet Union, as requiring:

...a consensus on the political and military imperatives of collective security, political cohesion among NATO nations....The SACEUR's efforts to ensure...that he

Gordon B. Turner, ed., A History of Military Affairs in Western Society Since the Eighteenth Century, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), p. 699. This quote begins by discussing, "Want, ill health, ignorance, race prejudice and slothful citizenship are enemies of America as truly as were Hitler and Mussolini and Tojo. But our concern must not be exclusively with manifestations of these social diseases within our own borders." This appears almost identical to a statement made by President Clinton in a speech given on March 1, 1995 where he said, "I always said in every speech that we had to have two objectives: We had to restore the American dream for all our people, but we also had to make sure that we move into the next century still the strongest nation in the world and the world's greatest force for peace and freedom and democracy." William J. Clinton, "The Vital Tradition of American Leadership in the World," U. S. Department of State Dispatch,

contributes to the successful attainment of cohesion...will carry him well beyond the scope of more traditional military commands.¹⁰

As the first SACEUR, Eisenhower, was once again called upon to use his considerable diplomatic and political skills in transforming NATO from idea to reality. He had to wring from European members not yet recovered from the devastation of World War II increases in their NATO force contributions which he then used to convince the U.S. Congress of the Europeans' commitment to NATO. Political "horse trading" at its best. Later, during the debate over Eisenhower's successor (General Matthew Ridgeway), proponents of Eisenhower's deputy, General Alfred M. Gruenther, believed that combat command experience was not as important as experience in the politico-military realm. They had come to believe that for NATO, "Questions of national and multi-national strategy, national and multi-national budget making were essentially *political* [emphasis added] and not military issues." Subsequent NATO commanders dealt with many diverse political issues affecting NATO's military capabilities including the rearmament of Germany, the abrupt withdrawal of France from the NATO military structure, and most recently, the loss of the original raison d'etre for NATO's existence with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Bernard Rogers, forward to Generals in International Politics, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander

Europe, ed. Robert S. Jordan (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987), p. xiv-xv.

Stephen E. Ambrose and Morris Honick, "Eisenhower, Rekindling the Spirit of the West" in Generals in International Politics, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, ed. Robert S. Jordan (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987), pp. 12-14.

George E. Pelletier, "Ridgeway, Trying to Make Good on the Promises," in <u>Generals in International Politics. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe</u>, ed. Robert S. Jordan (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987), pp. 51-52.

Ambrose and Honick, pp. 25-26. Eisenhower recognized the rearmament of Germany so soon after the end of World War II was his most difficult politico-military issue but that he couldn't reach his manpower goals without Germany. The policy was adopted by NATO during Eisenhower's tour but actually implemented during the tenure of the third SACEUR, General Alfred M. Gruenther following much political debate. See Robert S. Jordan, "Attempts to Retain NATO Solidarity," Generals in International Politics, pp. 53-72.

Lawrence S. Kaplan and Kathleen A. Kellner, "Lemnitzer, Surviving the French Military Withdrawal," Generals in International Politics, pp. 103-121.

In every case of major political-strategic issues confronting the NATO alliance and EUCOM, the SACUER/CINCEUR played a role transcending solely military direction of forces toward military objectives. To obtain the Cold War's strategic objectives in this theater--deterrence and containment of the USSR--each SACEUR was required to skillfully interweave military, political and diplomatic means achieve those ends.

CINC Engagement Strategies--The Link Between National Policy and Theater Execution

Just as the linkage between strategy and politics cannot be broken without peril in the realm of national strategy, neither can it be divorced at the lower theater levels. A review of some recent CINC statements on theater strategies reveals this critical linkage is integral to their theater operations. The National Security Strategy calls for "preventative diplomacy-through such means as support for democracy, economic assistance, overseas military presence, military-to-military contacts and involvement in multi-lateral negotiations...to help resolve problems, reduce tensions and defuse conflicts before they become crises." The regional CINCs are translating this national guidance into theater campaign strategies defining the theater military objectives (U.S. armed forces have, at a lower priority level, historically conducted what are now termed engagement operations). The overarching strategy of engagement brings to the forefront the political and diplomatic component of theater planning and force employment since the new focus is on using U.S. military forces as a means to peacefully shape and influence theater events. Following is a review of the

William J. Clinton, <u>A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement</u>, (White House: February 1995), p. 7.

Recent personal experience shows that often the average soldier, sailor, airmen, and Marine is more aware of this shift in emphasis and its supporting rational than some of the policy theorists and senior statesman

approaches of three different regional CINCs, more significant for their similarities than their differences despite the vast disparity in their three regions.

The first to win the conceptual "race to the blackboard" was a recent Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral Charles A. Larson. He developed a strategy called "cooperative engagement" to guide employment of forces in the Pacific Command (PACOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). Recognizing that "National survival, while always our first priority, [was] no longer 'first among equals' as our nation's primary concern" but believing that "...U.S. security policy in the Asia-Pacific region has been the linchpin of...stability [in the Pacific region]," he argued that continued military presence-engagement--was required if the U.S. desired to influence and shape the path of development in the Pacific theater. ¹⁷ Larson reduced the then nascent national security strategy into the following PACOM strategy:

"...[to] aggressively employ the available means (forces, assets, funds and programs) in three principal ways--forward presence, strong alliances and crisis response--to achieve the desired ends of engagement and participation in peace; deterrence and cooperation in crisis; and unilateral or multi-lateral victory in conflict." ¹⁸

The peacetime components of cooperative engagement are military-to-military contacts for training, combined exercises, meetings with senior leaders as well as humanitarian and civic action programs. Larson still considered combat readiness primary--but it was not the principal focus of his theater campaign. Combat readiness in this PACOM strategic

demonstrate in their writings. Of course, the soldier or sailor on patrol can see the impact-good or bad--of the strategy and is therefore by necessity more pragmatic.

Charles A. Larson, "Pacific Commands Cooperative Engagement Advancing US Interests," Military Review, vol. 74 no. 4, April 1994, pp. 6-9. In this article Admiral Larson is drawing the linkage between his theater policy and the grand security strategy for the region of President Clinton. Since the National Security Strategy for the new Administration, the President's policy for the region was that stated in a speech he made to the Republic of Korea's National Assembly on July 10, 1993.

architecture might be better termed an "enabler." For Larson, deterrence of regional conflict, not through the more traditional means of threat of force, but through the various means of engagement, was the primary goal. The current CINCPAC, Admiral Richard C. Macke is today continuing with this cooperative engagement campaign initiated by Larson. ¹⁹

Acting as soldier-statesmen, this campaign strategy instituted by Larson and continued by Macke tries to account for both national and regional political realities. The strong diplomatic component of this CINCPAC strategy is evident. Military-to-military contacts are, at least in part, intended to influence many of the regions' governments. Although democracies in name, many of the region's national leaders are from military backgrounds (if not, the military is often the power "behind the throne"). Thus, this political use of military means provides a method of entering debates internal to the regions' sovereign nations. Larson and Macke recognize the need for a politically based strategy due to the limitations of direct military force in achieving U.S. strategic ends in the PACOM region. This is exemplified by Larson's recommended approach to China:

"In the final analysis, I believe the best approach to dealing with China's continuing progress in the political, economic and military arenas is to engage Beijing in a dialogue aimed at fostering cooperation and avoiding the development of a peer competitor in Asia....Our objective is to nurture and sustain a bilateral military relationship that supports our mutual national interests and enhances regional stability."²⁰

While military-to-military contacts can have a stabilizing effect through development of both mutual understanding and the resulting transparency effects, it is doubtful that they can prevent a country from becoming a peer competitor. The China example does raise the

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Richard C. Macke, "Asia-Pacific Regional Security: Toward 2001," speech to the Royal United Service Institute, Canberra, Australia, on September 23, 1994. <u>Defense Issues</u>, vol. 9 no. 78, p. 2.

Larson, p. 13. The current CINCPAC Admiral Macke is continuing this bi-lateral approach to China; see Macke, p. 3.

question of whether military forces employed in CINCPAC's engagement strategy really can influence the path of development in Asia, particularly economically and democratically.

But the past and present CINCPACs have correctly assessed this strategy as the only relevant and available option for U.S. forces since employing force in the traditional sense would be destabilizing--opposite to the desired end.

General George A. Joulwan, SACEUR/CINCEUR, also promotes engagement as the military contribution to promoting democracy and stability in the European theater. A difference from CINCPAC, though, is Joulwan characterizes European Command as "...a theater in conflict." Claiming the best military means to maintain (improve?) stability in this region is forward presence, he also poses a rhetorical question by asking what constitutes deterrence in the post-Cold War era. His answer is that "...the new definition of deterrence [is] to deter conflict through the peaceful promotion of democratic ideals. The best way to deter conflict is to be actively engaged--politically, diplomatically, economically and militarily."

One of the methods Joulwan uses to achieve this new form of deterrence is having military liaison teams work with Eastern European countries to help them institute "...democratic reforms such as human rights, a military legal code based on our Uniform Code of Military Justice, chaplain and noncommissioned officer corps, and the military's relationship to their representative bodies." This program moves far beyond the accepted security training role of U.S. forces and very much into the political and diplomatic realm, and significantly into deliberations that most nations consider as distinctly sovereign. Taking

George A. Joulwan, "U.S. European Command, Regional Challenges Abound," <u>Defense 94</u>, Issue 3, p. 12.

Joulwan, p. 15.

²³ Joulwan, p. 16.

an active part in the development of laws and civil-military relations in another country has been done before by U.S. forces (the U.S. "assistance" to the Japanese in writing their post war constitution is one example)--but not in nations with whom the U.S. is and has been at peace.

This is a political use of U.S. forces quite different from the more traditional peacetime roles of "showing the flag" and coercive diplomacy. However, it is this very attempt "to promote democracy and stability peacefully" that Joulwan characterizes as "the cornerstone of our strategy." While readiness for war, as for CINCPAC, is clearly identified as a continuing EUCOM objective, the actual employment of EUCOM forces is also likewise directed toward deterring war by expanding peaceful interactions among and with other regional militaries. Joulwan has his political antenna sharply tuned and recognizes the direction in which the political winds both in Europe and in the U.S. are blowing (like the many successful SACEURs before him). To remain relevant in post-Cold War Europe, he can adopt no other strategy.

Joulwan does highlight some of the readiness costs of these EUCOM efforts to restore order and promote democracy. Using two NATO ongoing operations working to contain the Bosnian conflict as examples (Operations Sharp Guard and Deny Flight), he points out that although the cost in dollars might not be more, the opportunity cost (degraded overall readiness) in missed training for other missions is high for the ships and aircraft involved. Thus, as in a shooting war, there is an opportunity cost to this strategy requiring economy of force considerations such as a cost versus benefit analysis relative to the overall theater

Joulwan, p. 17

Joulwan, p. 17.

"engagement" campaign. In these types of operations, the theater commander must use his *political* as well as his military judgment in measuring the contribution they provide to an overall campaign more political than military--and make the corresponding asset allocation decisions.

The third theater to review is Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). Unlike the previous two, it does not have a large US standing force presence. In his statement to the House National Security Committee, General Barry R. McCaffrey, much like his Pacific and European counterparts, emphasizes the necessity of remaining engaged in this AOR. Again, promoting regional peace, development and stability are the main objectives. One of the roles he sees for U.S. forces in "continuing the positive trends in the Americas" is to teach and reinforce in the region's militaries a "...subordination to law and elected civilian leadership...[while] promot[ing] respect for human rights...." Another high priority operation for SOUTHCOM's is a counter-drug campaign. This requires a large degree of interagency cooperation since SOUTHCOM is effectively in the role of a supporting CINC for counterdrug operations. As with Eisenhower in war and peace, the ability of a CINC to use diplomatic skills in building and maintaining a coalition is of primary importance.

SOUTHCOM is facing a distinct challenge in conducting its theater campaign of engagement.²⁸ With the planned withdrawal from Panama, most influence in this theater derived from U.S. forces will be indirect, through country teams, combined exercises, and training programs such as International Military Education and Training (IMET). Should continued budgetary pressures force larger reductions in other theaters, SOUTHCOM may

Barry R. McCaffrey, Statement before U.S. Congress House Committee on National Security, Unpublished, March 8, 1995, p. 4.

McCaffrey, pp. 12-13.

McCaffrey, p. 13.

provide a model for future regional CINCs as the U.S. withdraws more of its forward stationed (or deployed) military from the major regions of the world. Present fiscal realities (resources) are the limiting factor for all the CINCs-despite the cry of "politics" by critics of their strategies, the CINCs must remain relevant "on the ground." Political reality is that must demonstrate a contribution to U.S. security by their forward deployed forces--or they will have no forces.

Conclusion

Just as they did for a grand strategic leader like General George Marshall, and for past theater commanders like Eisenhower, for present day CINCs *political dynamics count*. The only difference is today they are charged with conducting campaigns necessarily focused toward an objective harder to define than an enemy force--that of preventing regional instability. In the past, operations such as presence and military-to-military contacts were of secondary importance to deterrence as a function of force. Now, these formerly subordinate roles for U.S. forces have been elevated to positions of primacy by the largely *political* dimensions of U.S. strategy.

The argument that a military leader should only be concerned with strictly military matters is a recipe for disaster in both peace and war. Are there dangers in focusing too much on operations like peacekeeping, training foreign militaries, conducting exercises from which U.S. military training benefit is marginal for political reasons? Yes! However, the national strategy is set and the CINCs must seek an appropriate balance between combat effectiveness and political/strategic reality. As always, it is up to the leadership and skill of the theater commander to marshal all the capabilities of assigned "means" to achieve the strategic "end."

The CINCs recognize doing otherwise risks raising questions (both domestically and internationally) of how the overseas U.S. military promotes peace and stability in today's more interdependent and complex world and whether it is not serving a more "imperial" agenda. At this level of command, both domestic and international political savvy is a necessity--just as it was fifty years ago for Eisenhower. To be successful, today's CINC must be aware of all the forces at work *in and on* his theater. In the best sense of each word, a CINC must be both warrior and politician.

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